New London County Historical Society

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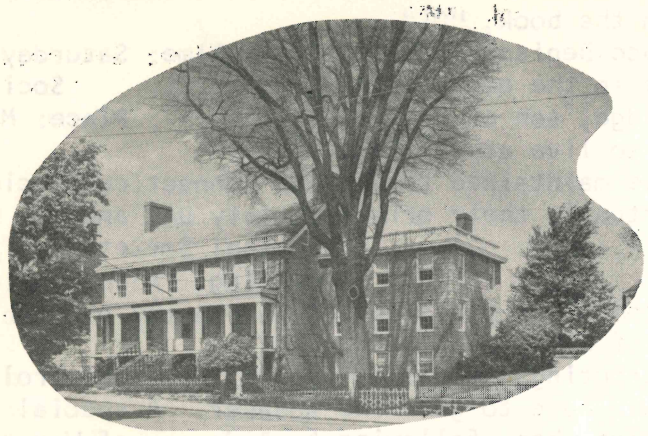

Quarterly Bulletin

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ANNUAL MEETING SEPTEMBER 18

The annual meeting of the Society for the election of officers and the transaction of any other business proper to come before the meeting will be held at the Mohican Hotel Roof Tuesday evening, September 18, 1962, at 8 o'clock.

The large and enthusiastic response to last year's dinner meeting prompted the Society to plan for a similar occasion this year. Dinner will be served at 6:30 on the roof. A Dutch treat cocktail hour will precede the dinner from 6 to 6:30. Reservations accompanied by your check for $3.50 (incl. tax and tip) should be sent to Mr. Henkle S. Scott, Mohican Hotel, by September 15.

We have been fortunate in securing as our speaker for this meeting Fessenden S. Blanchard of Scarsdale, New York, who will address the Society on "Ghost Towns of New England." Mr. Blanchard, well-known traveler through the eastern United States, has written a number of cruising guides. In his volume, "Ghost Towns of New England", he tells about a number of communities, once alive and flourishing, which lost their population through technological, social and economic changes. Dudleytown, Gay City, and Mount Riga are the Connecticut ghost towns dealt with in Mr. Blanchard's survey. In addition, he describes Mystic, "the town that came back."

The membership committee will be on hand to accept applications. This meeting is open to prospective members.

STONINGTON SOCIETY RESCUES HISTORIC HOUSE

Our hearty thanks go to the officers and members of the Stonington Historical Society and to Messrs. Williams Haynes of Stonington and Elmer Keith of Wallingford, champions of Colonial architecture, whose efforts have resulted in the rescue of the historic Whitehall Mansion from the jaws of the bulldozer and the path of the Interstate Route 95.

The 222-year old Mansion will be moved and restored as a museum by the Stonington Society. Mrs. DeWitt T. Keach of Hamden, the owner, will deed the society the house and land for a new site on a part of the 19 acres not to be taken by the State. She also will pay a substantial sum to move the three-story landmark.

Preservation of Whitehall climaxes an eight-month effort by antiquarians to save the old house. Williams Haynes said recently, "Both architecturally and historically Whitehall is important. Its builder, Dr. Dudley Woodbridge, was a prominent and well-to-do citizen of Stonington, and his home was an exceptionally ornate dwelling for this section of Connecticut when it was built in 1739-40."

The mansion has been empty since 1941. Today, besides being in an excellent state of preservation, it is fully furnished with many fine examples of furniture of the colonial and ensuing eras.

Another old Stonington landmark, the Woodbridge House, at Wheeler Road and Pequot Trail, has not been so fortunate. It is scheduled to be moved when the house is sold by the State Highway Department.

This house, described in the book, "Old Stonington Homes" by Grace Denison Wheeler, was built by Joseph Page in the early 1700's. In 1776, William Woodbridge, son of Dr. Dudley Woodbridge, came to live at the Page house. Later owners have maintained the house and grounds in virtually their original state.

However, with the development of plans for Interstate 95, in spite of efforts to save the house by possible rerouting, it was decided that the house would have to go. The first step in the move came when, following condemnation of the land and buildings, the furnishings and many of the antiques were sold at public auction last July. The final move will come when the house itself is sold. The hope is that it can be moved intact to another location where its dignity can be maintained.

THIRD CONNECTICUT RIVER RAMBLE
SEPTEMBER 29

An invitation has been received from the Connecticut River Watershed Council to attend the third River Ramble on Saturday, September 29.

Due to increased demand the Council has engaged a larger boat this year. The "Block Island", capacity 600 passengers, will leave the Middletown Municipal Dock promptly at 9:30 A.M., rain or shine and make a non-stop trip to Long Island Sound (Saybrook Light). On the return trip a stop will be made at the Goodspeed Opera House where Mrs. Lynde Selden, president of the Goodspeed Opera House Foundation, will personally conduct passengers on a tour of the recently renovated Opera House. It is planned to return to Middletown Dock by 7 P.M.

This year's caterer will serve coffee and pastries in the morning, a noon smorgasbord (we remember the delicious food served two years ago), and assorted sandwiches and desserts in the late afternoon. The price again this year will be $15.00 per person and due to demand special prices will not be available to minors.

Reservations should be made early. Checks should be made out to the Connecticut Watershed Council and mailed to the Council Office at 497 Main Street, P.O. Box 89, Greenfield, Massachusetts.

CONSTITUTION DAY DINNER MEETING

Time: Saturday, September 15 at 7:00
Social Hour 6:30
Place: Mohican Hotel Roof

The Connecticut Society SAR, the Connecticut Society DAR and the New London County Historical Society are jointly sponsoring this meeting. Nathan Hale Branch SAR and Lucretia Shaw Chapter DAR are the hosts.

Judge Thomas E. Troland will be the guest speaker. A special guest will be Dr. Charles A. Anderson of Warren, Ohio, president-general of the SAR.

Dinner cost, including tax and tip: Roast Beef $3.85; Salmon $3.50; Lobster $4.25.

Reservations, accompanied by check, should be made to Harry F. Morse, Chairman, 302 State Street, New London.

Hope to see you there!

NEXT LEAGUE MEETING AT WETHERSFIELD

The fall meeting of the Connecticut League of Historical Societies will be held on Saturday, September 22, at the Masonic Hall in Wethersfield. The all-day session, starting promptly at 10:30, will center around the theme, "Practical values of an historic district."

For Your Information - The Society's telephone number is Gibson 3-1409

The Mansion is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 1 to 4.

Custodian in residence: Mrs. Charles Menerey

Secretary and Curator: Mrs. Adam Knox